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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 002156

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TAGS: PHUM PTER CO

SUBJECT: REINSERTED GUERRILLA CLAIMS FARC RESPONSIBLE FOR
MASSACRE IN URABA REGION

REF: A. BOGOTA 1999

1B. BOGOTA 1981

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood Reasons 1.6 (x)

Summary

1. (S/NF) On March 2, Embassy officials met with reinserted FARC guerrilla member, Elkin Dario Tuberquia (strictly protect), and 17th Battalion Commander Lt. Colonel Nestor Duque Lopez. Tuberquia alleged that the FARC was responsible for the killings of the eight individuals as the three men, including Luis Eduardo Guerra, were interested in leaving the peace community. The third man was also thought by the FARC to be an army informant. Duque and Army Inspector General Pineda told Emboffs that the military was not near the site of the massacre and was not responsible for the crime. Additionally, according to press reports, during the late afternoon of March 2, the government's investigative commission was attacked by alleged members of the FARC on their way to interview members of the peace community. On March 3, Ambassador met with Army Commander General Castellanos and stressed the need for a swift, transparent investigation into this incident. End summary.

Reinserted Guerrilla Blames FARC

2. (S/NF) On March 2, Embassy officials met Elkin Dario Tuberquia (strictly protect), a former militia member of the 5th Front of the FARC, which operates around the peace community of San Jose de Apartado, located in Uraba, Antioquia Department. Tuberquia, who was a member of the FARC for 13 years, joined the government's reinsertion program in December 2004. He left behind family in San Jose de Apartado with whom he maintains contact. During the discussion, Tuberquia noted that when he left San Jose de Apartado, the peace community filed a complaint ("denuncia") against the 17th Brigade claiming that soldiers from the Brigade had tortured and killed him.

3. (S/NF) Tuberquia said he had been told it was members of the 5th Front of the FARC who killed all eight individuals for two reasons: (1) the men were planning on leaving the peace community and joining the government's reinsertion program and (2) the FARC thought one of the individuals was an army informant. He told Emboffs that Luis Eduardo Guerra, a member of the internal council of the peace community, had called him either February 15 or 16 expressing his desire to leave the peace community because he was tired of things that were "going on there." Guerra then asked Tuberquia how he (Guerra) could contact the 17th Brigade to move forward on this. Tuberquia also alleged to Emboffs that Guerra was a militia member of the FARC's 5th Front. Alejandro Perez (alias "Cristo de palo"), alleged commander of the FARC's 58th Front militia, had reportedly begun taking steps to leave the FARC and join the reinsertion program. Tuberquia believed the FARC discovered this information through listening in on phone calls made by the two on the public phone within the peace community, as there are only two public phones within the community; both lines are controlled by a local NGO. These phones are located in the NGO's office space and community members must ask permission to make phone calls. Regarding the case of Alfonso Bolivar, he said the FARC had accused him of disclosing the whereabouts of FARC 5th Front militia commander "Macho Rusio", who was killed three weeks ago, to military forces. As a result of these events, the FARC killed the men and their families.

Military Not in Area of Massacre

4. (C) The same day, Embassy officials met with Lt. Colonel Nestor Duque Lopez, Commander of the Engineer ("Ingenieros") Battalion of the 17th Brigade, who had been called back to Bogota to discuss the events of the massacre. Colonel Duque's battalion is charged with the responsibility of providing security in the area in and around San Jose de

Apartado, including the massacre site near the town of La Resbalosa. Still, the community, through its supporting NGO, the "Corporacion Juridica Libertad", maintains its claim that it was members of the 11th Brigade (based in Cordoba Department) who detained the individuals before their bodies were discovered.

15. (C) Colonel Duque and Army Inspector General Pineda explained to Emboffs that the military keeps track of its movements every hour and clarified that the actual killings took place on the morning of February 22. He then showed a map of all troop locations at that time, which had the closest military unit six kilometers from the site. However, because of the rough, heavily land-mined terrain, no troops would have been able to reach the site easily on foot. Military officials also noted that the area is one with a heavy FARC presence, and that there were no members of paramilitary organizations in the area.

Communiqu from SJA

16. (S/NF) Tuberquia and Col. Duque also called attention to the timing of the first communiqu (dated February 24, 2005) issued by the peace community which condemned the massacre. This communiqu, which Poloffs received in the early afternoon of February 24, says "on February 22, the half brother of Luis Eduardo, who had fled from the army, was looking for them in the house of Alfonso Bolivar and found blood which he followed until he found, near the house, a grave with the cadavers completely dismembered. This terrible discovery was made by the young man and others of the town of Mulatos who were looking for the disappeared." The government commission, which included members of the peace community, arrived at the site during the early afternoon of February 25. Colonel Duque said when they arrived, the gravesite was completely covered and appeared to them to be untouched, as if they were the first ones there, which contradicts the first communicate.

FARC Attacks Investigative Commission

17. (U) According to press reports, at roughly 5pm on March 2, the commission investigating the massacre, including four representatives from the Prosecutor General,s Office ("Fiscalia"), two from the Inspector General,s Office ("Procuraduria") and one from the Human Rights Ombudsman ("Defensoria"), were ambushed by presumed members of the FARC as they were returning to San Jose de Apartado from the massacre site to take additional testimonies. Two of the police officers providing security for the commission were injured and one died the next day. No members of the commission were wounded. Soon after, the army arrived and engaged in a two-hour firefight with the guerrillas.

Ambassador Meets with General Castellanos

18. (C) On March 3, Ambassador and Defense Attach met with Colombian Army Commander General Reynaldo Castellanos at the latter's request. Castellanos told the Ambassador that the military was not responsible for the killings of the eight individuals and believed, based on information they had, that the FARC was most likely the responsible party. Castellanos said the military would cooperate fully with civilian authorities and make public any information they receive. The Ambassador agreed that transparency was important and that the investigation needed to be completed in a prompt and thorough manner, and to swiftly bring to justice those responsible for this crime.

Comment

19. (C) Embassy continues to investigate all allegations and to call for a swift, transparent investigation into these killings. The MOD has said it will cooperate with the civilian investigation, while categorically denying any military involvement.

WOOD